

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTREAL 0468

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: OLD POLITICIANS NEVER DIE, NOR DO THEY RETIRE

REF: A) QUEBEC 0073, B) QUEBEC 0010, C) QUEBEC 466

1. CONSULS GENERAL HARPER AND MCNAMARA MET IN MONTREAL MARCH 6 WITH FORMER LIBERAL PARTY BOSS, PAUL DESCROCHERS. LATTER OFFICIALLY QUIT AS SPECIAL ADVISOR TO FORMER PREMIER BOURASSA IN SPRING 1974 BUT HAS MAINTAINED ACTIVE TIES TO PARTY STRUCTURE AS CHAIRMAN OF PARTY FUND AND SPECIAL ADVISOR ON PARTY ORGANIZATION. LOYAL PARTY CADRES AND OTHER "OLD FRIENDS" STILL CREDIT "ONCLE PAUL" WITH BUNYONESQUE POWERS AS POLITICAL MANIPULATOR AND SEER.

2. DESROCHERS TOLD US THAT HE NOW IS DEVOTING HIMSELF TO DEFEATING REFERENDUM AND IS NOT TAKING ACTIVE PART IN PRESENT LIBERAL PARTY LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE. ASSUMING ROLE OF SENIOR STATESMAN, THE OLD POL SAID HE IS MEMBER OF AD HOC GROUP FROM "QUEBEC-CANADA" PRO-UNITY ORGANIZATION -- UNDER AUSPICES OF MULTO-PARTY PRE-REFERENDUM HEADED BY CLAUDE CASTONGUAY (REFTEL) -- WHOSE PURPOSE IS TO COORDINATE EFFORTS OF
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VARIOUS GROUPS DEDICATED TO THE DEFEAT OF REFERENDUM AND, BY EXTENSION, OF PARTI QUEBECOIS AS POLITICAL INSTRUMENT OF SEPARATISM. GROUP HAS SUCCEEDED IN OBTAINING "SUBSTANTIAL" FINANCING AND WILL LAUNCH ON APRIL 21 CAMPAIGN THROUGHOUT PROVINCE AIMED AT GATHERING 2 1/2 MILLION SIGNATURES ON PETITION CALLING ON GOQ TO POSE SIMPLE, UNAMBIGUOUS QUESTION IN A REFERENDUM TO BE HELD AT EARLIEST DATE POSSIBLE.

PURPOSE OF PETITION IS INDUCE PQ AVOID TEMPTATION POSE TRICK QUESTIONS. HOWEVER, SHOULD IT SUCCUMB TO TEMPTATION, PETITION WOULD STRENGTHEN MORAL GROUND FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CHALLENGING LEGITIMACY OF RESULT AND FOR HOLDING FEDERALLY ORGANIZED REFERENDUM. COMMENT: WHEN ASKED WHETHER FUNDS GATHERED FROM "TRADITIONAL" BUSINESS SOURCES NOT LIKELY TO OUTLAWED UNDER NEW REFERENDUM LEGISLATION, DESROCHERS REPLIED THAT THIS IS REASON HIS GROUP HAS DECIDED ARRANGE FOR SUBSTANTIAL FINANCING PRIOR TO PASSAGE OF ACT WHICH EXPECTED LATER IN PRESENT SESSION OF ASSEMBLY. WHEN HIS LISTENERS EXPRESSED MILD SURPRISE AT SIZE OF GOAL OF 2.5 MILLION SIGNATURES AMONGST POPULATION OF ONLY 6 MILLION, DESROCHERS EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT WELL ORGANIZED DRIVE COULD REACH THIS AMBITIOUS GOAL, AND THAT, FOR DESIGNED PURPOSE, IT NECESSARY TO HAVE MAJORITY OF APPROXIMATELY 4 MILLION VOTERS. END COMMENT.

3. ALTHOUGH HE DISCLAIMED ANY ACTIVE PART IN LIBERAL LEADERSHIP BATTLE, DESROCHERS PREDICTED RYAN WILL WIN ON FIRST BALLOT WITH OVER 1800 VOTES OUT OF SOME 2640 DELEGATES, UNLESS CANDIDATE MAKES DREADFUL BLUNDER BEFORE CONGRESS IS HELD IN QUEBEC CITY APRIL 14-15.

4. DESROCHERS IS CONVINCED THAT LEVESQUE WILL CALL GENERAL ELECTION THIS FALL WITHOUT HOLDING PROMISED REFERENDUM BECAUSE OF PQ'S GROWING UNPOPULARITY AND DIFFICULTIES IN CONTROLLING CONFIDENTIAL

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DISSIDENTS WITHIN CABINET AND PARTY. ONLY BASIS DESROCHERS COULD GIVE UPON WHICH LEVESQUE MIGHT CALL AN ELECTION WAS SOMEWHAT HAZY CONTENTION THAT GOQ WILL FACE CRISIS IN SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER AS RESULT OF ITS INABILITY FINANCE ITS "SOCIAL PROGRAM." BANKER FRIENDS IN NEW YORK ALLEGEDLY HAVE TOLD DESROCHERS THAT THEY HAVE INFORMED LEVESQUE THAT LOANS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE TO PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT TO FINANCE ITS "SOCIAL PROGRAM" UNLESS GOQ PROCURES CLEARER MANDATE FROM ITS ELECTORATE. LEVESQUE THEN MAY SEIZE UPON THIS CRISIS TO GO TO PEOPLE. COMMENT: WE SEE LITTLE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT DESROCHERS PREDICTION AND FIND ALLEGED FINANCING DIFFICULTIES UNCONVINCING, GIVEN SIGNIFICANT LOSS OF FACE THAT NOT HOLDING PROMISED REFERENDUM WOULD ENTAIL UNLESS SOMETHING DRAMATIC DEMANDED ELECTION IN LIEU THEREOF. NONETHELESS, ONE HESITATES DISMISS SUCH CATEGORIC PREDICTION FROM SOMEONE OF DESROCHERS' REPUTATION. SINCE ONE OF PILLARS OF HIS POLITICAL POWER HAS BEEN HIS HIGHLY DEVELOPED POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE NETWORK, IT IS JUST POSSIBLE HIS ELECTORAL PREDICTION IS BASED ON FACTS AND SOURCES WHICH HE DOES NOT WISH FULLY REVEAL.

5. THIS IS JOINT MESSAGE FROM CONGENS QUEBEC AND MONTREAL.

HARPER

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